

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (canceled)

2. (currently amended) A disposable wearing article, comprising:  
a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said waist regions, each of said regions having an upper surface adapted to face a wearer's body and an lower surface adapted to face away from said wearer's body; and  
a tubular protrusion extending upwardly from the upper surface of said crotch region, and being sized and positioned in a transversely middle zone of said crotch region for surrounding at least one of an anus and a urethral orifice of the wearer;

wherein

said protrusion comprises a flexible and elastic foamed plastic material;  
said protrusion defines an opening adapted to come into contact with the wearer's body, said opening being enlarged upon compression of said protrusion in a height direction of said protrusion; and

~~The wearing article according to claim 1, wherein~~ said protrusion consists of a single block of said foamed plastic material.

3. (withdrawn - currently amended) The wearing article according to claim [[1]]  
6, wherein

a circumferential wall of said protrusion comprises a filler and a cover sheet covering the filler; and

said filler comprises a plurality of discrete chips of said flexible and elastic foamed plastic material, said chips being arranged in multiple layers one on top another in the height direction of said protrusion.

4. **(currently amended)** The wearing article according to claim [[1]] 6, wherein said foamed plastic material is polyurethane foam having a cell population in a range of 30 to 150/25 mm, a density in a range of 20 to 120 kg/m<sup>3</sup> and an impact resilience in a range of 5 to 30%.

5. (previously presented) The wearing article according to claim 2, further comprising an absorbent body and a liquid-pervious topsheet overlying and covering said absorbent body, wherein said block of said foamed plastic material is bonded to an upper surface of the liquid-pervious sheet.

6. **(currently amended)** A disposable wearing article, comprising:

a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said waist regions, each of said regions having an upper surface adapted to face a wearer's body and an lower surface adapted to face away from said wearer's body; and

a tubular protrusion extending upwardly from the upper surface of said crotch region, and being sized and positioned in a transversely middle zone of said crotch region for surrounding at least one of an anus and a urethral orifice of the wearer;

wherein

said protrusion comprises a flexible and elastic foamed plastic material;

said protrusion defines an opening adapted to come into contact with the wearer's body, said opening being enlarged upon compression of said protrusion in a height direction of said protrusion;

~~The wearing article according to claim 1, wherein~~

    said protrusion comprises a front end segment adjacent said front waist region, a rear end segment adjacent said rear waist region and transversely opposite lateral segments connecting and extending between said front and rear end segments; and

    a height of said protrusion gradually increases toward at least one of said front and rear end segments and is maximal at an apex on a longitudinal center line of said wearing article.

7-10. (canceled)

11. (currently amended) A disposable wearing article, comprising:

a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said waist regions, each of said regions having an upper surface adapted to face a wearer's body and an lower surface adapted to face away from said wearer's body; and

a tubular protrusion extending upwardly from the upper surface of said crotch region, and being sized and positioned in a transversely middle zone of said crotch region for surrounding at least one of an anus and a urethral orifice of the wearer;

wherein

said protrusion comprises a flexible and elastic foamed plastic material; and

said protrusion defines an opening adapted to come into contact with the wearer's body, said opening being enlarged upon compression of said protrusion in a height direction of said protrusion;

The wearing article according to claim 1, further said wearing article further comprising an absorbent body and a liquid-impervious backsheet underlying said absorbent body;

said tubular protrusion being bonded to an upper surface of said absorbent body;

said absorbent body comprising therein a through hole which is aligned with the tubular protrusion and defines together with the tubular protrusion a pocket; and

a portion of said backsheet being exposed, at a bottom of said pocket, through said opening

and said tubular protrusion.

12. (currently amended) A disposable wearing article, comprising:

a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said waist regions, each of said regions having an upper surface adapted to face a wearer's body and an lower surface adapted to face away from said wearer's body; and

a tubular protrusion extending upwardly from the upper surface of said crotch region, and being sized and positioned in a transversely middle zone of said crotch region for surrounding at least one of an anus and a urethral orifice of the wearer;

wherein

said protrusion comprises a flexible and elastic foamed plastic material;

said protrusion defines an opening adapted to come into contact with the wearer's body, said opening being enlarged upon compression of said protrusion in a height direction of said protrusion; and

~~The wearing article according to claim 1, wherein the circumferential wall of said protrusion comprises~~

inner and outer surfaces; and

a top surface connecting said inner and outer surfaces, said top surface being convex upward as viewed in a cross-section of said protrusion.

13. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein said chips make up 100 to 60 wt% of said filler.

14. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein each of said chips has a maximum diameter in a range of 1 to 20 mm.

15. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 13, wherein said filler further

comprises thermoplastic synthetic fibers which make up at most 40 wt% of said filler.

16. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein a maximum diameter of the chips in each of said layers progressively increases from an upper one of said layers toward a lower one of said layers .

17. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein a density of said chips progressively increases downwardly in the height direction of said protrusion.

18. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, further comprising a layer of thermoplastic synthetic fiber that underlies said chips in a vicinity of a bottom of said protrusion, wherein said layer of thermoplastic synthetic fiber has a bending stiffness in a range of 0.98 to 5.0 N/25.4 mm.

19. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein said filler further comprises thermoplastic synthetic fibers mixed with said chips to fill gaps between adjacent said chips.

20. (withdrawn) The wearing article according to claim 3, wherein said chips have different sizes and irregular shapes.

21. (canceled)

22. (previously presented) A disposable wearing article, comprising:  
a front waist region, a rear waist region and a crotch region extending between said waist regions, each of said regions having an upper surface adapted to face a wearer's body and a lower surface adapted to face away from said wearer's body;

an absorbent body, a liquid-impervious backsheet underlying said absorbent body, and a liquid-pervious topsheet overlying said absorbent body;

a protrusion extending upwardly from an upper surface of the topsheet in said crotch region, and being sized and positioned for at least partially surrounding at least one of an anus and a urethral orifice of the wearer;

wherein

said protrusion comprises a flexible and elastic foamed plastic material; and

said absorbent body comprises therein a through hole which is aligned with the protrusion and defines together with the protrusion a pocket; and

a portion of said backsheet is exposed, at a bottom of said pocket, through said opening and said protrusion.